

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-10

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /011 R

66664

DRAFTED BY: S/S-O: ACPERKINS

APPROVED BY: S/S-O: WNEWLIN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

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STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

FOLL SENT ACTION SECSTATE FROM BUENOS AIRES 02 AUG 73 REPEATED
TO YOU QUOTE

S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 5659

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DEPT PASS EYES ONLY CHARGES BRASILIA AND MONTEVIDEO,
ASST. SEC HURWITCH

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINR, AR, BR, UY

SUBJ: POSSIBLE ARGENTINE INTERVENTION IN URUGUAY

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY REGARDS POSSIBILITY ARGENTINE INTER-
VENTION OR MEDDLING IN URUGUAYAN AFFAIRS AS VERY REMOTE.
WHILE THERE ARE NUMEROUS POSSIBLE HYPOTHESES BASED ON
POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN URUGUAY, ONLY IN MOST EXTREME
CASE DOES ARGENTINE INTERVENTION APPEAR AT ALL LIKELY.
END SUMMARY.

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2. BOTH ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL ARE BELIEVED TO SHARE AN
INTEREST IN THE MAINTENANCE OF URUGUAY AS A VIABLE, BUFFER
STATE, WHICH HAS LONG BEEN SEEN BY THEM AS ITS PRIMARY
RAISON D'ETRE. AS THE TWO MOST POWERFUL STATES

IN SOUTH AMERICA AND THE ONLY POTENTIAL ASPIRENTS TO, OR CHALLENGERS OF, HEGEMONY IN THE SOUTHERN CONE, THE INTERESTS OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS ARE SERVED BY THE EXISTENCE OF AN INDEPENDENT, NEUTRAL STATE WHICH AVOIDS THE FRICTIONS OF AN IMMEDIATE JUXTAPOSITION OF JURISDICTIONS.

3. RECENT EVENTS IN ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY HAVE MOVED IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS, URUGUAY HAS IN RECENT MONTHS WITNESSED A MOVE BY THE MILITARY TO A VIRTUALLY DOMINANT POLITICAL POSITION. IN ARGENTINA, IN CONTRAST, THE MILITARY THIS YEAR SURRENDERED PUBLIC AUTHORITY TO CIVILIANS AFTER HOLDING IT FOR SEVEN YEARS.

4. CLOSE HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND FAMILY CONNECTIONS HAVE PRODUCED AMONG THE ARGENTINES AN ATTITUDE WHICH LOOKS UPON URUGUAY AS A "LITTLE BROTHER," WITH ATTENDANT FRUSTRATIONS AND RESENTMENTS BY THE URUGUAYANS AND A PATRONIZING, EVEN PROTECTIVE, ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE ARGENTINES. ANY STRONG-ARM TREATMENT OF URUGUAY WOULD HAVE LITTLE POPULARITY AMONG MOST ARGENTINES AND, PERHAPS IN PART FOR THIS REASON, IT HAS NOT OFTEN BEEN USED TO DISTRACT OR AROUSE PUBLIC OPINION IN ARGENTINA IN THE FACE OF DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. IT IS RELEVANT TO NOTE THAT URUGUAY STOOD UP QUITE BRAVELY AND SUCCESSFULLY TO PERON AT THE PEAK OF HIS POWER AND MANY ANTI-PERONISTS FOUND REFUGE THERE, ALTHOUGH ADMITTEDLY URUGUAY IN THAT PERIOD WAS IN A FAR DIFFERENT SITUATION. EXCEPT FOR THE RIVER BOUNDARY DISPUTE, WHICH OCCASIONALLY ATTRACTS SOME INTEREST, CURRENT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY ARE NOT NUMEROUS OR SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH TO GENERATE MUCH HEAT.

5. HOWEVER, THE INSTABILITY OF RECENT URUGUAYAN POLITICAL LIFE HAS BEEN A SOURCE OF DEEP PREOCCUPATION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA. THIS CONCERN WAS AMPLY EVIDENCED UNDER THE LATE ARGENTINE MILITARY REGIMES WHICH MADE CREDITS AVAILABLE TO THE GOU TO BOLSTER IT WHEN UNDER SEIGE BY THE
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TUPAMAROS. WEAPONS, AMMUNITIONS AND MILITARY ADVISERS ALSO WERE SENT COVERTLY ON AN ARMY-TO-ARMY BASIS. REPORTED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TERRORIST GROUPS IN BOTH COUNTRIES GAVE THE GOA ADDED REASON FOR SUCH ASSISTANCE. GIVEN THE SOMEWHAT PARALLEL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR TAKEOVERS OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE ARGENTINE MILITARY ARE BELIVED TO LOOK WITH CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY UPON THE CURRENT EFFORTS OF THEIR URUGUAYAN COLLEAGUES TO CLEAN UP "THE CIVILIAN MESS." COVERT ASSISTANCE, AGAIN ARMY-TO-ARMY, WITHOUT THE GOA'S KNOWLEDGE COULD BE FORTHCOMING, IF REQUESTED, AND THE ARGENTINE MILITARY UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD RESIST BEING PRESSED INTO ANY UNFRIENDLY ACTION AGAINST THE PRESENT AUTHORITIES OF URUGUAY, EVEN IF THE GOA ITSELF WERE SO MINDED.

6. THE STRONG LEFTWARD TURN TAKEN BY THE CAMPORA GOVERNMENT IN POLICY AND MANY OF ITS APPOINTMENTS BROUGHT TO POWER IN ARGENTINA A GROUP WHICH INCLUDED MANY WHO UNQUESTIONABLY HAD LITTLE SYMPATHY WITH THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT OF URUGUAY, AND THE TREND OF EVENTS THERE. ASIDE FROM THE ASYLUM GRANTED SOME URUGUAYAN DISSIDENTS, THE CAMPORA GOVERNMENT WAS IN POWER TOO SHORT A TIME AND WAS TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS TO THINK OF ANY INCURSIONS AGAINST ITS NEIGHBOR OR MEDDLING IN ITS AFFAIRS. CAMPORA'S REPLACEMENT BY PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT LASTIRI RETURNED THE GOA TO A MORE MODERATE COURSE, WHICH TREND IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE WHEN AND IF PERON IS ELECTED TO OFFICE, AS CURRENTLY INDICATED. WHILE PERON SPEAKS OF REESTABLISHING ARGENTINE LEADERSHIP IN LATIN AMERICA, ARGENTINA'S CURRENT PROBLEMS ARE SUCH AS TO KEEP HIM FULLY OCCUPIED IN HOLDING THINGS TOGETHER AT HOME WITH LITTLE TIME OR RESOURCES FOR FOREIGN ADVENTURES OF THIS KIND.

7. THE ABOVE IS PREDICATED UPON A CONTINUANCE OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN URUGUAY WITHOUT ANY PRONOUNCED DETERIORATION. HOWEVER, IF MATTERS THERE WERE TO BECOME TRULY CHAOTIC WITH A GENERALIZED BREAKDOWN OF LAW AND ORDER AND PARTICULARLY A LOOMING PROSPECT OF A COMMUNIST OR OTHER EXTREMIST TAKEOVER, A DIFFERENT OUTLOOK MIGHT WELL EMERGE. BOTH THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AND THE GOA, AS FORESEEABLY CONSTITUTED, DOUBTLESS WOULD VIEW ANY SUCH SITUATION WITH GREAT ALARM AND ALSO WOULD BE DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER THE POSSI-

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BILITY OF UNILATERAL INTERVENTION BY BRAZIL. BOTH COULD BE EXPECTED TO SEE EYE-TO-EYE ON THE DESIRABILITY OF COVERT OR EVEN OPEN ASSISTANCE TO THE BELEAGUERED URUGUAYAN AUTHORITIES. OPEN ASSISTANCE WOULD OF COURSE RAISE THE QUESTION OF THE BRAZILIAN ATTITUDE. BRAZIL UNDER ITS PRESENT GOVERNMENT CERTAINLY WOULD SHARE ARGENTINE ALARM OVER ANY SUCH DETERIORATION OF THE URUGUAYAN SITUATION.

8. THE QUESTION THEN BECOMES ONE OF WHETHER ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL COULD OR WOULD WORK TOGETHER IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES. SOME 12 OR 18 MONTHS AGO THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WERE BELIEVED TO HAVE AN AGREEMENT TO STUDY THE URUGUAYAN SITUATION TOGETHER AND TO ACT TOGETHER IN CASE OF NEED, I.E., A FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION. SUCH AN AGREEMENT, IN ADDITION TO REFLECTING TO SOME DEGREE TRADITIONAL ARGENTINE SUSPICION OF AND RELUCTANCE TO USE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PREFERENCE TO DIRECT, BILATERAL HANDLING OF DISPUTES, DOUBTLESS STEMMED FROM A RECOGNITION OF JOINT INTEREST AND IN EVEN GREATER PART FROM A MUTUAL DESIRE TO AVOID UNILATERAL ACTION BY EITHER ONE. TODAY, EVEN WITH THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN ARGENTINA, THAT AGREEMENT MAY STILL BE IN EFFECT SINCE THE BASIC REASONS WHICH MOTIVATED IT CONTINUE TO BE VALID AND THE

SHRILLER NATIONALIST ASPECTS OF THE CAMPORA REGIME, OF WHICH BRAZIL WAS A PRINCIPAL TARGET, ALREADY HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY MUTED. ARGENTINA CANNOT INTERVENE ALONE IN URUGUAY WITHOUT CREATING A MASSIVE PROBLEM IN ITS RELATIONS WITH BRAZIL AND ANY UNILATERAL INTERVENTION BY THE LATTER CERTAINLY WOULD CREATE A FIRST CLASS STIR IN ARGENTINA. SOME ARGENTINES PROFESS TO FEAR THAT THE PRESENT GOB WITH ITS DYNAMISM AND SUPERIOR RESOURCES MIGHT SIMPLY MOVE UNILATERALLY IN AN EXTREME CASE AND INFORM THE GOA AFTER THE FACT. IT IS MORE PROBABLE, IN THIS MISSION'S OPINION, THAT IF THE THREAT TO MUTUAL INTERESTS--ANETTY DO APPEAR TO BE MUTUAL--IS GREAT ENOUGH TO PROMPT THOUGHTS OF INTERVENTION BY EITHER POWER, BOTH WOULD PROBABLY CONCLUDE, HOWEVER RELUCTANTLY, THAT ONLY A JOINT EFFORT WOULD ENSURE AGAINST UNILATERAL INTERVENTION BY THE OTHER AND THUS AVOID THE CREATION OF STILL GREATER PROBLEMS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE152655
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: S/S-O: ACPERKINS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 XGDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P750011-1089
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730869/abqcemzu.tel
Line Count: 189
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS STADIS ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS STADIS ONLY
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16-Jan-2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POSSIBLE ARGENTINE INTERVENTION IN URUGUAY
TAGS: PFOR, PINR, AR, BR, UY
To: BRASILIA
MONTEVIDEO
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005